

Goodnews appears out of the darkness without a sound, melting through the boma as though immune to the thorns that should have scraped and rattled a dry warning. With no energy to lift herself up to a sitting position, Judith stays prone on the ground. Akello rises to his feet like a cat ready to pounce in the flickering firelight. Judith watches him fluidly take up his machete before he recognizes the giant man's shape emerging like a shadow separating from the impenetrable night. They both settle back into their own exhausted thoughts. Judith doesn't move.

Looming huge and dark as the sky behind him, Goodnews slides the limp body of a small gazelle from his shoulder and drops it next to the fire in a puff of dust. Particles, backlit by undulating flame, drift into the air and coat everything they reach. Goodnews kneels and lithely cuts along the line where the animal's hair grew together into a peak down the center of its pale underside. The large hands begin to pull the skin back to reveal an expanse of purple muscle run through with veins and fascia, more fresh meat than their group could possibly eat in the night. The familiar metallic scent of bloody death swims into Judith's nose. As Goodnews works over the carcass, his gaze falls on Abani, who in his short absence went from sitting next to the hearthstones to curled on her side in the dirt, staring vacantly at the leaping flames. She gives no sign of recognition in the light dancing across the shine of her eyes.

Maniacal laughter echoes across the savannah as hyenas chase each other through the darkness. Judith has just enough wherewithal to wonder if the fresh blood will draw the hyenas to them, but she does not have the energy to care. Maybe a lion will come and do them the favor of ending this miserable journey.

Abani pulls her arms around the protrusion of her belly and groans. Akello is seated at his wife's feet, slowly rubbing upward on her swollen ankles. He pushes against the flesh that grows